

A message from the OTF President



Anne Vinet-Roy

Dear colleagues,

As I write these words, we are in the final stretch of the 2019-2020 school year. And what a year it has been! I sincerely hope that you are all doing as well as can be, and that you feel a certain sense of satisfaction for everything that you personally and professionally accomplished this year. We all had to adapt to a pandemic not experienced for many years. I'm sure I'm not the only one who thinks everyone in the education communities in our publicly funded education system did an amazing job at supporting students and their families.

We know that reopening schools will be much more complicated than it was to close them. Much will have to be done to protect everyone involved. Important, meaningful discussions and consultations need to occur with key partners in Ontario's publicly funded education to ensure a smooth, safe reopening of our schools, whenever that may be.

At OTF, we had to rethink some of our events and how we deal with the issues related to our mandate, but our priority was and remains the safety of everyone involved. Personally, it wasn't always easy to see some of the great things that OTF does have to change, be postponed or modified. Regardless of these adjustments, the work we managed to accomplish is absolutely remarkable. In everyone's respective roles, concern for members' and

students' wellbeing remained at the forefront, not because someone told us to do so, but rather because it is what educators and education workers do best, in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

As I near the end of my term, although saddened by the changes and the goals I was not able to reach because of the COVID-19 crisis, I am ever so grateful for the incredible team work of OTF with its Affiliates and various key partnerships in support of educators and education workers, as well as student learning conditions and wellbeing.

And most of all, I wish that everyone remains healthy and strong, no matter what the future holds for the upcoming school year. It is time to pause and take care of loved ones and ourselves.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Vinet-Roy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anne Vinet-Roy
President

OTF welcomes 10 outstanding Fellows

Annually, OTF awards up to 10 Fellowships to deserving individuals who have made outstanding contributions to OTF, publicly funded education, and/or advocating on social issues. Each Affiliate may nominate up to two candidates for a Fellowship in the member category and one or more candidates for a Fellowship in the non-member category.

Normally, the new Fellows are honoured at the Annual Board of Governors' meeting in August. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, this meeting will be held virtually. To celebrate the new Fellows in person, they will be recognized at the OTF Spring Board of Governors' meeting in April 2021.



Jim Giles
ETFO



Barb Dobrowolski
OECA



Joanne Languay
ETFO



Malini Leahy
OSSTF



Karen Littlewood
OSSTF



David Mastin
ETFO



Brian McGown
(posthumously)
OECA



Ron Mock
Non-member



Théophile Rwigimba
AEFO



Rémi Sabourin
AEFO

Leigh Cassell receives inaugural OTF Special Recognition Award

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is pleased to announce that Leigh Cassell is the winner of the new OTF Special Recognition Award presented annually to an organization, group or individual in acknowledgement of outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario, beyond the school board level.

"The excellence of Ontario's publicly funded education system is supported and enhanced by many individuals and groups who are external to Ontario's school boards," states Anne Vinet-Roy, OTF President. "OTF is very pleased to recognize the contributions that

Leigh Cassell has made for many years to support Ontario's educators and students."

Leigh Cassell is CEO at Digital Human Library (dHL), and Founder and President of the Digital Human Library Foundation. In 2011, she launched dHL to address the urban and rural gaps in education by using digital technologies to connect students with people, places, and ideas around the world.

"I am honoured to be recognized by my peers in education. I share this



award with all our Ontario innovative educators. This award represents their countless hours of leadership and imagination," states Leigh Cassell.

Due to the current pandemic, OTF will recognize Leigh with the presentation of the award at the Spring Board of Governors' meeting in April 2021.

A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer



Scott Perkin

Dear colleagues,

As we near the end of the current school year it seems appropriate, given the current circumstances, to reflect on the many challenges that our educators and students have faced during this past year.

It began with government proposals that would have seriously undermined the integrity and success of the education system: funding cuts to critical programs, higher class sizes (meaning fewer teachers and reduced course options for students), mandatory e-learning, and curricula changes absent meaningful stakeholder engagement.

All of this naturally led to various job actions by frontline educators who were determined to protect the learning environment and the supports necessary for student success.

Then the pandemic hit and the remainder of the school year was forced online. And while Ontario's educators have since made the best of a very challenging situation, there is no doubt that

they, like their students, look forward to the day when face-to-face learning returns once schools reopen.

At OTF, we also look forward to the return of some sort of normalcy and the enjoyment of business and social interactions. As an example, we have had to postpone the celebration of our newest OTF Fellows, all of whom would normally be honoured at our Annual Meeting in late August. Since our meeting will occur online this year, we have decided to wait until next spring hopefully to meet in person to pay tribute to OTF's 2020 Fellows. In the meantime, however, we congratulate our newest Fellows who are included in this edition of *Interaction*!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Perkin', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott Perkin
Secretary-Treasurer

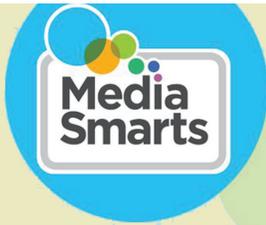
OTPP funding valuation filed

On March 31, 2020, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) released its results for 2019. For a seventh consecutive year, the Plan is fully funded and has a funding surplus of \$6.1 billion (as of January 1, 2020).

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Ontario Government, as co-sponsors of the Plan, have decided to file the January 1, 2020 funding valuation with the regulatory authorities and to classify the surplus as a contingency reserve. The purpose of the contingency reserve is to reduce volatility in the Plan's funded position and to facilitate stability in Plan members' contributions and benefits.

"Classifying the present surplus as a contingency reserve will facilitate greater stability of contribution rates and benefit levels, including inflation protection, for Plan members, in the event that future valuations show a decline in Plan assets and/or an increase in Plan liabilities," stated Anne Vinet-Roy, OTF President.

The co-sponsors must file a funding valuation with the regulatory authorities at least every three years. Filing this year means that the Plan can now choose to wait an additional three years before filing again during what may be a challenging financial period given the current pandemic.



Save the date!
15th annual Media Literacy Week,
October 26-30, 2020

Media Literacy Week is an annual national campaign hosted by MediaSmarts and the Canadian Teachers' Federation to promote digital and media literacy.

The 2019 theme for media literacy week was [Break the Fake](#); the supporting resources are still available on the [MediaSmarts website](#).

The theme for this year has not been announced but it is certain that it will be largely online and will provide teachers with an online learning resource hub with suggested activities for their classrooms that can be done in person or online.

From face-to-face in person to face-to-face virtually

Extraordinary circumstances sometimes dictate a need for extraordinary responses. The eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the declaration of a provincial state of emergency, reflects just such an unprecedented turn of events. It required us to pivot quickly in our quest to provide high-caliber professional learning and networking opportunities.

The closure of Ontario's publicly funded schools for an extensive period following March Break and the ban on large gatherings meant that we could no longer host our scheduled in person spring meeting of the OTF Curriculum Forum (OTFCF) in May. To ensure that communication lines remained open and that there were regular virtual opportunities for members of the Forum to connect, we organized five one-hour virtual *Online Office Hours* meetings. These virtual check-ins provided OTFCF members with a forum to share their respective Associations' updates, to stay abreast of professional learning opportunities sponsored by member associations, OTF, and its Affiliates and, finally, to remain attuned to distance teaching and learning issues and available resources across the province.

To be sure, *Online Office Hours* cannot replace in person collaboration but finding temporary ways to connect can make things seem, well, a little more ordinary and normal, lessen anxieties and turn challenges into opportunities.



What works for me might work for you!

A successful OTF webinar series

In May and June, OTF hosted a series of 16 webinars under the banner, "What works for me might work for you!" to support teachers with the challenge of distance teaching and education activities.

Keeping to OTF's belief, "for teachers, by teachers," the webinars brought together a selection of excellent teacher facilitators to share hands-on tips and tools to support members across divisions and subject areas.

The majority of the webinars were sold out within hours of the webinar posting. Given this, hopefully another series of webinars will be offered in the future.

All the webinars are archived. To check out the selection, just go to [Past webinars](#).

SAFE@SCHOOL

Coming soon to Safe@School

Online course for students on Cyberbullying

As part of OTF's ongoing partnership with le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA), the Safe@School website will soon be updated with COPA's evidence-informed online course for students on cyberbullying. This online course will help students learn about bullying and cyberbullying, and will provide advice on different ways they can protect themselves from cyberbullying. As well, great student resources on consent will be posted over the coming weeks.

<https://www.safeatschool.ca/>